

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-08 L-03 TRSE-00 XMB-02 STR-04  
/028 W

-----030679 091735Z /43

P 091202Z SEP 77

FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9954

INFO USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: NA

TATGS: BENC GB

SUBJECT: MAJOR PROJECTS: SANTA CLARA AND OWENDO

REFS: A. LIBREVILLE 2285

B. STATE 194509

1. IN CALL ON OPRAG DIRECTOR CLAUDE DAMAS ON WEDNESDDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, FOLLOWING INFORMATION OBTAINED WHICH SHOULD BE USEFUL TO USODC AND US FIRMS, IN ADDITION TO MATERIAL FORWARDED IN LIBREVILLE 2285.

2. SANATA CLARA: DAMAS STATED THAT PREQUALIFICATION DOCUMENTS AND OFFICIALNOTICE WILL BE READY LATE IN WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 12. SLIPPATE IN AVAILABILITY DATE REPORTED LIBREVILLE 2285 WAS CAUSED BY GOG DICISION TO ADD PROVISION THA FIRSM INDICATE ABILITY TO SEEK AND FIND FINANCING FOR PROJECT. SUFFICIENT TIME WILL BE ALLOWED FOR PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION OF DOSSIER, WHICH DAMAS BELIEVES WILL BE DUE IN LATE NOVEMBER. NOTICES AND SETS OF DOCUMENTATION WILL BE PROVIDED TO ALL EMBASSIES IN LIBREVILLE AND ALL GABONESE EMBASSIES ABROAD. DAMAS SAID THAT DOCUMENTATION, PREPARED INBOTH ENGLISH AND FRENCH, WOULD ALSO BE AVAILABLE THROUGH SOROS ASSOCIATES IN NEW YORK.

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FORMAL CALL FOR BIDS IS EXPECTED NEXT YEAR WITH CONSTRUCTION TO BEGIN IN MID TO LATE 1978.

3. AS SOON AS PREQUALIFICATION DOCUMENTS ARE ISSUED, EMBASSY WILL CABLE FULL TRANSLATION OF PERTINENT PORTIONS AND WILL ALSO FORWARD COPIES TO USDOC AND DEPARTMENT, AF/C, VIA POUCH TO INSURE

AVAILABILITY FOR US FIRMS, IN EVENT MATERIAL NOT  
AVAILABLE ON TIMELY BASIS THROUGH SOROS.

4. OWNENDO PORT EXPANSION: DAMAS WAS SOMEWHAT LESS  
SPECIFIC ON PLANS FOR OWNENDO EXPANSION, ESTIMATED  
AT VALUE 20 BILLION CFA (US DOLLAR 80 MILLION). HE  
DOES NOT REPEAT NOT KNOW WHETHER PREQUALIFICATION  
AND BIDDING PROCEDURES WILL APPLY TO OWENDO PROJECT  
BUT EXPRESSED HOPE THAT THEY WILL. FRENCH ENGINEERING FIRM  
BCEOM HAS COMPLETED TECHNICAL STUDIES AND  
IS NOW PREPARING FINAL REPORT WHICH SHOULD BE  
READY LATER THIS YEAR. IN MEANTIME, DAMAS SUGGESTED,  
CONFIRMING OUR ADVICE FORWARDED PARA FIVE LIBREVILLE  
2285, THAT US FIRMS PREPARE LETTER EXPRESSING  
INTEREST IN OWENDO PORT TO HIM AND SIMILAR LETTER  
TO MINISTER OF TRANSPORT RAWIRI. EMBASSY WOULD BE  
PLEASED TO HAND CARRY THESE LETTERS TO DAMAS AND  
MINISTER RAWIRI TO INSURE THEIR RECEIPT AND TO  
EMPHASIZE AND REITERATE US FIRMS INTEREST IN OWENDO  
PROJECT.

5. FYI: DAMAS HAS BROWN AND ROOT LETTER RE OWENDO  
PORT. EMBASSY HAS LEFT COPY AT DAMAS OFFICE ON  
AUGUST 31. FOR MOMENT DAMAS DOES NOT INTEND TO  
REPLY BUT BELIEVES REPLY WILL BE MADE BY MINISTER  
RAWIRI UPON HIS RETURN FROM PARIS SOMETIME NEXT  
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WEEK.

6. COMMENT: DAMAS WAS EXTREMELY CORDIAL AND FRANK  
THROUGHOUT DISCUSSION AND GAVE IMPRESSION OF BEING  
PERSONALLY AND GENUINELY INTERESTED IN SEEING  
US FIRMS COMPETE FOR AND SECURE CONTRACTS FOR BOTH  
PROJECTS. HE STATED THAT IF A US FIRM COULD RECEIVE  
CONTRACT FOR EITHER OR BOTH PROJECTS, ADDITIONAL  
CONTRACTS WOULD NATURALLY FOLLOW. DAMAS AWARE  
OF INTEREST OF BROWN AND ROOT, YARMOND INTERNATIONAL,  
AND MCDERMOTT IN PROJECTS IN GABON. DURING DISCUSSION  
DAMAS MADE NO EFFORT TO CONCEAL HIS LOW  
OPINION OF METHODS USED BY FRENCH FIRMS TO SECURE  
CONTRACTS IN GABON. HE ALLUDED TO WHAT COULD BEST  
BE DESCRIBED AS QUOTE SNEAKY METHODS UNQUOTE AND  
ACKNOWLEDGED THAT ROAD FOR US FIRMS WOULD BE DIFFICULT.  
HE ALSO HINTED AT STRONG FRENCH INFLUENCE IN  
OTHER LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT AND WOTUH OTHER INDIVIDUALS  
HERE WHICH COULD JEOPARDIZE ADHERENCE TO STANDARD  
AND OPEN BIDDING PROCEDURES. END COMMENT. YATES

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## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009